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ATHEISM REFUTED;

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IN

A DISCOURSE

TO PROVE

THE EXISTENCE OF A GOD.

BY T. P.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. JOHNSON, IN ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.

1798.

[ PRICE SIXPENCE. ]

R. Hall



## P R E F A C E.

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IN these days of infidelity, when it is to be apprehended, that the atheistical doctrines of a neighbouring country are extending themselves in this, notwithstanding the efforts of several pious laymen, as well as exemplary divines; a friend to religion has great pleasure in being able to lay before the public a discourse to prove the existence of a God, pronounced in a society of friends, who meet together at stated times, for the purpose of forwarding philosophical truth, and of repelling the flippant witticisms of the present day, whenever directed against this grand truth.

Under whatever form of religious ceremony  
the Supreme Being may be worshipped, that he  
4 exists



exists must be a matter of previous conviction. The society being impressed with a belief of his existence, it became one of their first objects to prove the fact. It is conceived that this is done in the following production, in a most masterly and philosophical manner. And it is presumed that, whether the novelty of the axiom, the mathematical deduction to a conclusive proof, the acuteness of the reasoning, the learning displayed, or the simplicity of the style be considered, there is nothing in ancient or modern learning, from the wisdom of Plato to the syllogism of Clarke, that has so satisfactorily proved the existence of a God. Under this impression it has been thought advisable to prevent its being confined to the limited circle of a private society, and to give it as extensive a circulation as its merit will undoubtedly secure it. Happy will the society deem itself if it tend to recal one erring, or even to fix one doubting mind.



## ATHEISM REFUTED.

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RELIGION has two principal enemies, Fanaticism and Infidelity, or that which is called Atheism. The first requires to be combated by reason and morality, the other by natural philosophy.

The existence of a God is the first dogma of religious worship. It is upon this subject that I solicit your attention: for though it has been often treated of, and that most sublimely, the subject is inexhaustible; and there will always remain something to be said that has not been before advanced. I go therefore to open the subject, and to crave your attention to the end.

The universe suggests the creed of a philosopher. It is there that he reads of God. It is there that the

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proofs of his existence are to be sought and to be found. The sceptic may deny the divine authority of the inspired writings, may assert that they are the works of man's hands, and that they carry no evidence in themselves that God is the author of them. To him we hold out this universe as a thing that man could not make ; to him we propose it as the evidence for his belief, as the inimitable word of God.

Contemplating the universe, the whole system of creation, in this point of light, we shall discover, that all that which is called natural philosophy is properly a divine study—It is the study of God through his works—It is the best study, by which we can arrive at a knowledge of his existence, and the only one by which we can gain a glimpse of his perfection.

Do we want to contemplate his power? we see it in the immensity of the Creation. Do we want to contemplate his wisdom? We see it in the unchangeable order by which the incomprehensible WHOLE is governed. Do we want to contemplate his munificence? We see it in the abundance with which he fills the earth. Do we want to contemplate his mercy? We see it in his not withholding that abundance even from the unthankful.

thankful. In fine, do we want to know what God is?  
Let us search the creation.

It has been the error of the schools to teach astronomy, and all the other sciences, and subjects of natural philosophy, as accomplishments only; whereas they should be taught theologically, or with reference to the Being who is the author of them; for all the principles of science are of Divine origin. Man cannot make, or invent, or contrive principles. He can only discover them; and he ought to look through the discovery to the Author.

When we examine an extraordinary piece of machinery, an astonishing pile of architecture, a well executed statue, or an highly finished painting, where life and action are imitated, and habit only prevents our mistaking a surface of light and shade for cubical solidity, our ideas are naturally led to think of the extensive genius and talents of the artist. When we study the elements of geometry, we think of Euclid. When we speak of gravitation, we think of Newton. How then is it, that when we study the works of God in the Creation, we stop short and do not think of God? It is from the error of the schools in having taught those subjects as accomplishments only, and thereby separated



the study of them from the Being who is the author of them.

The schools have made the study of theology to consist in the study of opinions in written or printed books; whereas theology should be studied in the works or book of the creation. The study of theology in books of opinions has often produced fanaticism, rancour, and cruelty of temper; and from hence have proceeded the numerous persecutions, the fanatical quarrels, the religious burnings and massacres, that have desolated Europe. But the study of theology in the works of the creation produces a directly contrary effect. The mind becomes at once enlightened and serene; a copy of the scene it beholds; information and adoration go hand in hand; and all the social faculties become enlarged.

The evil that has resulted from the error of the schools, in teaching natural philosophy as an accomplishment only, has been that of generating in the pupils a species of Atheism. Instead of looking through the works of Creation to the Creator himself, they stop short, and employ the knowledge they acquire to create doubts of his existence. They labour, with studied ingenuity, to ascribe every thing they behold to innate properties of matter; and jump over all the rest by saying, that matter is eternal.

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Let us examine this subject ; it is worth examining ; for if we examine it through all its cases, the result will be, that the existence of a superior cause, or that which man calls God, will be discoverable by philosophical principles.

In the first place, admitting matter to have properties, as we see it has, the question still remains, how came matter by those properties ? To this they will answer, that matter possessed those properties eternally. This is not solution, but assertion ; and to deny it is equally as impossible of proof as to assert it. It is then necessary to go further, and therefore I say,—if there exist a circumstance that is *not* a property of matter, and without which the universe, or to speak in a limited degree, the solar system, composed of planets and a sun, could not exist a moment ; all the arguments of Atheism, drawn from properties of matter, and applied to account for the universe, will be overthrown ; and the existence of a superior cause, or that which man calls God, becomes discoverable, as is before said, by natural philosophy,

I go now to shew that such a circumstance exists, and what it is :

The universe is composed of matter, and, as a system, is sustained by motion. Motion is *not a property* of matter, and without this motion the solar system could not exist. Were motion a property of matter, that undiscovered and undiscoverable thing called perpetual motion would establish itself. It is because motion is not a property of matter, that perpetual motion is an impossibility in the hand of every being but that of the Creator of motion. When the pretenders to Atheism can produce perpetual motion, and not till then, they may expect to be credited.

The natural state of matter, as to place, is a state of rest. Motion, or change of place, is the effect of an external cause acting upon matter. As to that faculty of matter that is called gravitation, it is the influence which two or more bodies have reciprocally on each other to unite and be at rest. Every thing which has hitherto been discovered with respect to the motion of the planets in the system, relates only to the laws by which motion acts, and not to the cause of motion. Gravitation, so far from being the cause of motion to the planets that compose the solar system, would be the destruction of the solar system, were revolutionary motion to cease; for as the action of spinning upholds a top, the revolutionary motion upholds the planets in  
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their orbits, and prevents them from gravitating and forming one mass with the sun. In one sense of the word, philosophy knows, and atheism says, that matter is in perpetual motion. But the motion here meant refers to the *state* of matter, and that only on the surface of the earth. It is either decomposition, which is continually destroying the form of bodies of matter, or re-composition, which renews that matter in the same or another form, as the decomposition of animal or vegetable substances enters into the composition of other bodies. But the motion that upholds the solar system is of an entire different kind, and is not a property of matter. It operates also to an entire different effect. It operates to *perpetual preservation*, and to prevent *any change* in the state of the system.

Giving then to matter all the properties which philosophy knows it has, or all that atheism ascribes to it, and can prove, and even supposing matter to be eternal, it will not account for the system of the universe or of the solar system, because it will not account for motion, and it is motion that preserves it. When, therefore, we discover a circumstance of such immense importance, that without it the universe could not exist, and for which neither matter, nor any, nor all, the properties of matter can account; we are by necessity forced into the rational and comfortable belief of the existence of a

cause superior to matter, and that cause man calls God.

As to that which is called nature, it is no other than the laws by which motion and action of every kind, with respect to unintelligible matter, is regulated. And when we speak of looking through nature up to nature's God, we speak philosophically the same rational language as when we speak of looking through human laws up to the power that ordained them.

God is the power or first cause, nature is the law, and matter is the subject acted upon.

But infidelity by ascribing every phenomenon to properties of matter, conceives a system for which it cannot account, and yet it pretends to demonstration. It reasons from what it sees on the surface of the earth, but it does not carry itself on to the solar system existing by motion. It sees upon the surface a perpetual decomposition and recomposition of matter. It sees that an oak produces an acorn, an acorn an oak, a bird an egg, an egg a bird, and so on. In things of this kind it sees something which it calls a natural cause, but none of the causes it sees is the cause of that motion which preserves the solar system.

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Let us contemplate this wonderful and stupendous system consisting of matter and existing by motion. It is not matter in a state of rest, nor in a state of decomposition or recomposition. It is matter systematized in perpetual orbicular or circular motion. As a system that motion is the life of it: as animation is life to an animal body; deprive the system of motion, and, as a system, it must expire. Who then breathed into the system the life of motion? What power impelled the planets to move since motion is not a property of the matter of which they are composed? If we contemplate the immense velocity of this motion, our wonder becomes increased, and our adoration enlarges itself in the same proportion. To instance only one of the planets, that of the earth we inhabit, its distance from the sun, the center of the orbits of all the planets, is, according to observations of the transit of the planet Venus, about one hundred million of miles; consequently the diameter of the orbit or circle in which the earth moves round the sun is double that distance; and the measure of the circumference of the orbit, taken as three times its diameter, is six hundred million of miles. The earth performs this voyage in three hundred and sixty-five days and some hours, and consequently moves at the rate of more than one million six hundred thousand miles every twenty-four hours.

Where



Where will infidelity, where will atheism, find cause for this astonishing velocity of motion, never ceasing, never varying, and which is the preservation of the earth in its orbit? It is not by reasoning from an acorn to an oak, from an egg to a bird, or from any change in the state of matter on the surface of the earth, that this can be accounted for. Its cause is not to be found in matter, nor in any thing we call nature. The atheist who affects to reason, and the fanatic who rejects reason, plunge themselves alike into inextricable difficulties. The one perverts the sublime and enlightening study of natural philosophy into a deformity of absurdities by not reasoning to the end; the other loses himself in the obscurity of metaphysical theories, and dishonours the Creator by treating the study of his works with contempt. The one is a half-rational of whom there is some hope, the other a visionary to whom we must be charitable.

When at first we think of a Creator, our ideas appear to us undefined and confused; but if we reason philosophically, those ideas can be easily arranged and simplified. *It is a Being whose power is equal to his will.* Observe the nature of the will of man. It is of an infinite quality. We cannot conceive the possibility of limits to the will. Observe, on the other hand, how

exceedingly limited is his power of acting compared with the nature of his will. Suppose the power equal to the will, and man would be a God. He would will himself eternal, and be so. He could will a creation and could make it. In this progressive reasoning, we see, in the nature of the will of man, half of that which we conceive in thinking of God, add the other half and we have the whole idea of a being who could make the universe, and sustain it by perpetual motion, because he could create that motion.

We know nothing of the capacity of the will of animals; but we know a great deal of the difference of their powers. For example, how numerous are their degrees, and how immense is the difference of power, from a mite to a man. Since then every thing we see below us is a progression of power, where is the difficulty in supposing that there is at the *summit of all things* a Being in whom an infinity of power unites with the infinity of will? When this simple idea presents itself to our mind we have the idea of a perfect being that man calls God.

It is comfortable to live under the belief of the existence of an infinitely protecting power; and it is an addition to that comfort to know, that such a belief is  
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not a mere conceit of the imagination, as many of the theories that are called religious are ; nor a belief founded only on tradition or received opinion, but is a belief deducible by the action of reason upon the things that compose the system of the universe ; a belief arising out of visible facts, and so demonstrable is the truth of this belief, that if no such belief had existed the persons who now controvert it, would have been the persons who would have produced and propagated it ; because, by beginning to reason, they would have been led on to reason progressively to the end, and thereby have discovered that matter and all the properties it has, will not account for the system of the universe, and that there must necessarily be a superior cause.

It was the excess to which imaginary systems of religion had been carried, and the intolerance, persecutions, burnings, and massacres, they occasioned, that first induced certain persons to propagate infidelity ; thinking, that upon the whole, it was better not to believe at all, than to believe a multitude of things and complicated creeds, that occasioned so much mischief in the world. But those days are past ; persecution has ceased, and the antidote then set up against it has no longer even the shadow of apology. We profess, and we proclaim in peace, the pure, unmixed, comfortable, and rational belief



belief of a God, as manifested to us in the universe. We do this without any apprehension of that belief being made a cause of persecution as other beliefs have been, or of suffering persecution ourselves. To God, and not to man, are all men to account for their belief.

It has been well observed at the first institution of this society, that the opinions which form the basis of its belief have been held from the commencement of the world; that they are not novelties, but are confessedly the basis of all systems of religion, however numerous and contradictory they may be. All men in the outset of the religion they profess are adorers of a God, and friends of man\*. It is impossible to form any system of religion without building upon these principles, and therefore they are not sectarian principles, unless we suppose a sect composed of all the world.

I have said in the course of this discourse, that the study of natural philosophy is a divine study, because it is the study of the works of God in the Creation. If we consider theology upon this ground, what an exten-

\* The society, in their enquiry after Truth, resorted to first principles, and took, as the foundation of their future superstructure, that innate propensity of man wherever existing to the adoration of a God, and the love of his fellow-creatures.

five field of improvement in things both divine and human opens itself before us ! All the principles of science are of divine origin. It was not man that invented the principles on which astronomy, and every branch of mathematics are founded and studied. It was not man that gave properties to the circle and the triangle. Those principles are eternal and immutable. We see in them the unchangeable nature of the Divinity. We see in them immortality, an immortality existing after the material figures that express those properties are dissolved in dust.

The society is at present in its infancy, and its means are small ; but I wish to hold in view the subject I allude to, and instead of teaching the philosophical branches of learning as ornamental accomplishments only, as they have hitherto been taught, to teach them in a manner that shall combine theological knowledge with scientific instruction ; to do this to the best advantage, some instruments will be necessary for the purpose of explanation, of which the society is not yet possessed. But as the views of the society extend to public good, as well as to that of the individual, and as its principles can have no enemies, means may be devised to procure them.

If we unite to the present instruction, a series of lectures

tures on the ground I have mentioned, we shall, in the first place, render theology the most delightful and entertaining of all studies. In the next place, we shall give scientific instruction to those who could not otherwise obtain it. The mechanic of every profession will there be taught the mathematical principles necessary to render him a proficient in his art. The cultivator will there see developed the principles of vegetation; while, at the same time, they will be led to see the hand of God in all these things.

THE END.



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